

10 Ways to Open Your Heart to Your Mother

Dear Mom, I've Always Wanted You to Know: Letters from the Heart

1. HONOR YOURSELF

Take a few moments to honor and appreciate yourself. Acknowledge your courage to open your heart, articulate your emotions on paper, and grow from your willingness to write a letter to your mother. When you take the time to reflect inwardly, you nurture yourself.

2. RECONNECT TO YOUR HEART

Take some deep breaths and connect emotionally with your mother. Self-reflection requires a change of pace of what you may be accustomed to. Allow yourself the time to relax. Create a quiet, private space to write your letter. Perhaps choose a favorite place in nature, listen to soothing music such as Enya, Steve Halpern, or classical music, or enjoy your favorite food or tea in a place where you feel peaceful.

3. CREATE A DESIRED OUTCOME

Expand your thoughts beyond your present image of your mother and your relationship. If you are encountering challenges with your relationship, be open to experiencing her in a new light. For example, you may want to resolve past hurts or be more loving toward her. You may want to understand more or develop more of an appreciation for her. This exercise is not about dumping on your mother. It is about exploring your emotions through letter writing, resolving past hurts, and experiencing positive shifts within yourself and your relationship with your mother. Aiming for a desired outcome will guide you to be more centered on what is most important. Let the process unfold naturally. Dianne Collins, creator-author of *Quantum Think*®, says, “It is like planting the seeds for a garden of love and appreciation, honor, and respect. In such a relationship garden, even if weeds sprout, you

10 Ways CONTINUED

can just handle them and remain in awe of the beauty blossoming there.” Write, visualize, and feel one positive expression from writing the letter.

4. EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS HONESTLY

Eliose Ristad says, “Feel the opposites that comprise your being human. Feel the power in these opposing forces within you. Without these opposites, you would be as bland and characterless as unsalted mush.”

Certain words listed below may prompt a particular feeling you have or have had toward your mother. To release a negative feeling, you might want to write about that feeling and see what you discovered about yourself in the process. This exercise is about acknowledging a specific feeling, releasing it, and learning from it. It is about letting go of what holds you back. If it evokes a positive feeling, you may discover something new about your mother. Remember, this is a springboard to guide you. Only you know what is true in your heart.

Choose one or two emotions listed below when you think of your mother and write about them. Also describe what you learned about yourself through this process.

Fear, Embarrassment, Joy, Celebration, Enthusiasm, Sorrow, Sadness, Regret, Remorse, Grief, Guilt, Freedom, Letting Go, Joy, Release, Gratitude, Appreciation, Respect, Courage, Bravery, Risk Taking, Control, Regret, Bossiness, Criticism, Epiphany, Forgiveness, Insight, Resentment, Anger, Betrayal, Jealousy, Competition, Estrangement, Love, Understanding, Acceptance, Compassion, Forgiveness, Peace of Mind

5. APPRECIATE ALL OF THE MEMORIES

Be grateful for all of the memories you have with your mother and learn from them. Recall defining moments, challenging times, or

10 Ways CONTINUED

particular gestures. You may not know how you feel until you put pen to paper. Simply let your ideas unfold naturally without forcing them. Welcome your uncensored emotions without judgments. If judgments arise, gently release them as part of the process. Be patient and loving to yourself.

As you revisit your feelings, jot down 5 memories of your mother. You may have fewer or you may have more, but 5 is a place to begin.

6. EXPLORE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

We view our relationships according to our perspective on life. Many times, we cannot see beyond our own experiences. As you think of your relationship with your mother, begin viewing her in various roles in her life: as a woman, wife, daughter, grandmother, volunteer, professional, and friend. Seeing your mother in a new light can provide a fresh perspective on the way you view her, yourself, and your relationship.

Write down 5 or more things you've noticed about yourself and your mother when you explore these different roles.

7. THINK FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

As daughters, we may focus on the relationship with only our mothers. We blame our mothers for the beliefs they may have adopted from their mothers, and so on. If we explore the past, we notice that certain behaviors have been passed on to us from generation to generation.

Jot down 5 of these belief systems. If you are not sure about those in other generations, speculate and write them down anyway.

8. GO BEYOND STEREOTYPICAL EXPECTATIONS

We often expect our mothers to be a certain way from the cultural messages we grew up with, and when they do not meet our image, we feel disappointed and even resentful. Often, our expectations cloud

10 Ways CONTINUED

us from appreciating our mothers for who they are. Once we can identify with our false expectations, we can honor their uniqueness.

Jot down 5 expectations you have now or once had with your mother. Also write down what you discovered from this process.

9. MAKE CHALLENGES YOUR GREATEST GIFTS

We often blame our mothers for the hardships we experienced while growing up and the hardships we still experience: for not being there; for being there in the “wrong way,” for the woman we are; for the woman we are not; for the challenges we had to overcome because of our mothers. Many times, our challenges turn into resentments, which prevent us from being in the present moment. Feelings of anger that may have begun with our mother may even move into other relationships.

Write down 5 resentments about your mother. Explore your challenges with your mother as gifts and write down what you discovered.

10. OPEN YOUR HEART

The objective of these 10 exercises is to examine your relationship with your mother from new perspectives and open your heart. When we view our experiences in new ways, we enrich our relations with others and ourselves. Feel free to use some or all of these exercises to support you in writing your letter.

Begin your letter now. Be true to your personal voice. It will always lead you to the right place. The rest will follow.

10 Ways CONTINUED

10 QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What did you learn about yourself from your experiences with your mother?
2. What did your mother represent to you growing up?
3. What did you want but did not get from your mother?
4. If you only had one day to resolve the issues with your mother, what would you say?
5. What do you constantly complain about regarding your mother?
6. What kind of relationship would you like to have with your mother?
7. Is there one event with your mother that changed the course of your life?
8. What resentments or dislikes do you have regarding your mother?
9. What do you admire about your mother?
10. What does your mother represent to you now?

~ LISA R. DELMAN

Speaker, author of Dear Mom, I've Always Wanted You to Know . . . Daughters Share Letters from the Heart, Penguin 2005. Founder and visionary of the international Heart Project. Encourages women to articulate their emotions sacredly on paper initiating a journey that often leads to self-discovery, healing past wounds, and an opportunity to feel liberated. www.TheHeartProject.com

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